

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4360

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY

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AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY

CINCLANT

CINCEUR PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, MILI, AO

SUBJ: SOUTHWESTERN ANGOLA

1. DURING THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 13 TDY OFFICER KENNETH ROGERS
MADE AN EXTENSIVE TRIP THROUGH SOUTHWESTERN ANGOLA. HIS REPORT
ON THAT TRIP FOLLOWS:

2. SA DA BANDEIRA: TOGETHER WITH TWO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
PORTUGUESE DISPLACED PERSONS RELOCATION COMMITTEE IN A PIPER
AZTEC HE ARRIVED IN SA DA BANDEIRA AT ABOUT 11 AM ON OCTOBER 14.
THE CONTROL TOWER HAD BEEN ABANDONED AND THE PLANE MADE AN
UNASSISTED LANDING. SEVERAL DISCONSOLATE PORTUGUESE WERE SLUMPED
AROUND THE AIRPORT WITH THEIR BAGGAGE WAITING FOR A COMMERCIAL
AIRCRAFT WHICH HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE THREE DAYS EARLIER.
SA DA BANDEIRA IS A BEAUTIFUL CITY WITH PERFECT CLIMATE AND
ROBUST CITIZENS. PROBABLY 75 PERCENT OF THE HOUSES HAVE BEEN
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ABANDONED, THEY SEEMED TO BE INTACT, GRAFFITI OF THE VARIOUS

LIBERATION MOVEMENTS PAINTED ON THEM.

3. THE GOVERNOR OF THE DISTRICT TOLD ROGERS AND OBSERVATIONS CONFIRMED, THAT FOOD SUPPLIES IN THE CITY WERE AMPLE. IN FACT, THE SHOPS WERE STOCKED MUCH BETTER THAN THOSE IN LBANDA. HE SAID THAT THEY WERE SHORT OF MEDICINE AND HOSPITAL SUPPLIES. DURING HIS STAY MOST OF THE HOSPITAL PATIENTS WERE TAKEN OUT OF SA DA BANDEIRA BY THE RED CROSS. THE REFUGEE COMMITTEE OF SA DA BANDEIRA WAS WELL-ORGANIZED AND THOROUGH. WHILE HE WAS THERE, A TRAIN OF 1300 TIGHTLY PACKED REFUGEES LEFT FOR MOCAMEDES UNDER PHYSICAL CONDITIONS BETWEEN MISERABLE AND POOR. THE TRAIN PROBABLY WAS PROPERLY EQUIPPED FOR 450 PASSENGERS. ANOTHER TRAIN OF 300 LEFT ON THE SAME DAY.

4. EARLIER THAT DAY, THE LAST OF THE PORTUGUESE TROOPS LEFT SA DA BANDEIRA BY MOTOR CONVOY. BEFORE THEY LEFT THE RACED AROUND THE CITY TOOTING BUGLES AND SHOUTING FAREWELL TO THE POPULACE AND THIS PROBABLY STIMULATED THE EXODUS OF SOME. WITH THEIR FLAGS FURLED THEY TOO PROCEEDED TO MOCAMEDES, BUT BEFORE THE TRAIN LEFT. THE MPLA IMPOSED A 000 PM CURFEW, BUT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR OUR MAN TO OVERLOOK IT IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DEPARTURE OF THE REFUGEE TRAINS AT 11 PM.

5. THE ATTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE OF SA DA BANDEIRA REGION IS ONE OF TRAGIC DISAPPOINTMENT. WITH GOOD REASON THEY LOVED THEIR BEAUTIFUL TOWN AND THE HOMES THEY HAD BUILT OVER THE YEARS. A NUMBER OF THEM SAID THEY PLANNED TO REMAIN IN SA DA BANDEIRA, ONE REASON WHY THE RED CROSS AND OTHER COMMITTEE OPERATE SO WELL, AS THE LEADERS ARE AMONG THOSE WHO WISH TO STAY.

6. IN GENERAL, THE PORTUGUESE WHO PLAN TO STAY PREFER THE MPLA OVER THE OTHER TWO LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. NOT SO MUCH FROM POLITICAL CONVICTION BUT BECAUSE THEY FEEL THE MPLA IS A LITTLE MORE ORGANIZED AND KEEPS THINGS RUNNING, BUT MORE IMPORTANT THEY DREAD ANOTHER FIRE FIGHT. THE TRIBALIZED AFRICANS IN SOUTHWESTERN ANGOLA WOULD PREFER THAT ALL THE GROUPS LEFT, BUT IF THEY HAD TO CHOOSE, WOULD TAKE ZYITA. THE HUAMBOS, HUILAS, AND QUANYAMAS FEAR THAT MPLA WOULD FORCE COLLECTIVIZATION ON THEM AND DESTROY THEIR TRADITIONAL STRUCTURE.

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7. PORTUGUESE RELIEF OFFICIALS ESTIMATED THAT NO MORE THAN 3 TO 5 PERCENT OF 10,000 PORTUGUESE WOULD REMAIN IN SOUTHWESTERN ANGOLA. WHILE ON THE TRAIN ABOUT TO DEPART FROM SA DA BANDEIRA TO MOCAMEDES, ROGERS HEARD SEVERAL PORTUGUESE SHOUTING AT EACH OTHER "WELL, YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING TO STAY", AND GENTLE CHIDING ONE ANOTHER FOR SKULKING OUT OF TOWN WHEN IN FACT THEY HAD WITH BRAVADO INSISTED THAT THEY WOULD STAY, COME WHAT MAY.

8. MOCAMEDES: THE SMALL PORT TOWN ON THE EDGE OF THE NAMIB DESERT WAS VERY CROWDED WITH REFUGEES FROM THE HUILA PLATEAU AND AREAS ALL ACROSS SOUTHERN ANGOLA. ROGERS PARTICIPATED IN THE LOADING OF ONE SHIP - THE LOBITO, A CARGO CARRIER THAT HAS A VERY LIMITED PASSENGER CAPACITY. THREE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY PASSENGERS WERE CRAMMED ON BOARD MOSTLY ON DECK IN UNCOMFORTABLE AND IN SOME CASES MISERABLE CONDITIONS. THEY HAD TO BRING THEIR OWN FOOD, ALTHOUGH POWDERED MILK WAS PROVIDED BY THE RED CROSS FOR CHILDREN.

THERE WERE A NUMBER OF STRETCHER CASES INCLUDED IN THIS TIGHTLY PACKED HUMAN CARGO. THE PASSENGERS FACED THE HARD 28-HOUR JOURNEY TO LUANDA WITH STOLID RESIGNATION. THERE WERE NO HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE CITY DUESLO THE PRESS OF REFUGEES ALTHOUGH ROGERS FOUND A SPACE IN THE RAILROAD WORKERS BARRACKS. ALL FOOD WAS IN VERY SHORT SUPPLY AND ONLY ONE SMALL RESTAURANT IN THE ENTIRE CITY WAS FUNCTIONING: CHICKEN NECKS AND RICE. ROGERS ALSO VISITED THE PORT OF PORTO SALAZAR AT SACO BAY NORTH OF MOCAMEDES, THE TERMINAL FOR THE CASSINGA IRON MINES.

THERE HE SAW THE PORUGUESE CARGO SHIP "MALANGE" LOADING HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS AND BAGGAGE OF THE REFUGEES FROM SOUTHWESTERN ANGOLA. LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF CRATES OF HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS WERE STACKED IN A VAST AREA. BEFORE THE CRATES WERE LOADED ABOARD THE "MALANGE" ALMOST EVERY ONE OF THEM WAS OPENED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE OF THE MPLA. LOOTING AMOUNTED TO FROM 40 TO 100 PERCENT OF EACH CRATE, INCLUDING ALL FOOD, ANY CLOTHING THAT WOULD FIT THE LOOTERS OR SOMEONE THEY MIGHT KNOW, AND ANYTHING ELSE THAT CAUGHT THEIR FANCY. THERE WILL BE A LOT OF DISAPPOINTED REFUGEES WHEN THEY OPEN THEIR CRATES IN LISBON WHEN THEY FIND NOT MUCH LEFT. THE HEAVILY ARMED WORKERS COMMITTEE EXPLAINED RATHER SHEEPISHLY THAT, AFTER ALL, THE WHITE PORTUGUESE HAD OBTAINED THE GOODS FROM THE WORK OF THE BLACK ANGOLANS SO THE GOODS REALLY BELONGED TO THE "PEOPLE" AFTER ALL.

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9. PORTUGUESE TROOPS: TWO COMPANIES OF PORTUGUESE TROOPS, ALMOST ALL OF THEM FROM THE AZORES, WERE QUARTERED IN MOCAMEDES. THEIR PERSONAL CONDUCT WAS AN EMBARRASMENT TO THEIR OFFICERS AND TO ANYONE WHO WATCHED THEM IN THEIR DRUNKEN CAREENING AND GENERAL LACK OF SOLDIERLINESS. ON OCTOBER 16 THEY TOGETHER WITH THE TROOPS FROM SA DA BANDEIRA EARLIER REFERRED TO TOTALLING 850 BOARDED THE PORTUGUESE NAVAL FLEET OILER - "SDO SEBASTIAO" FOR LUANDA AND ONWARD AIR TRANSPORTATION TO LISBON. CONCERNING THEIR EQUIPMENT, AS FAR AS ROGERS COULD TELL, PORTUGUESE TOOK MOST OF IT OUT OF SA DA BANDEIRA THAT WAS PORTABLE, BUT A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT WAS LEFT IN TOCAMEDES WHEN THE TROOPS DEPARTED. HOWEVER, THE AZORIAN SOLDIERS BRAGGED THAT THEY HAD DISMANTLED AND DISABLED THE EQUIPMENT TO BE LEFT BY SPIKING CANNONS AND RIPPING OUT TRANSMISSION WIRES IN TRUCKS, NOT OUT OF POLITICAL MOTIVES,

BUT JUST AS A JOKE.

10. LOBITO-BENGUELA: THESE TWO FORMERLY PROUD CITIES HAVE DRIFTED INTO SULLEN APATHY. THERE IS VERY LITTLE TRAFFIC. A HANDFUL OF PORTUGUESE SOLDIERS WERE STILL IDLING ABOUT THE STREET OF LOBITO. THREE VERY POOR RESTAURANTS WERE STILL OPEN. PUBLIC SERVICES WERE BADLY DISRUPTED. THE TOWER AND AIRPORT FIELD AT LOBITO WERE ABANDONED AND AN UNASISTED LANDING WAS MADE. HOWEVER THE TOWER AT BENPUELA WAS MANNED AND THAT AIRPORT WAS GUARDED BY NINE MPLA SOLDIERS. WHILE ROGERS WAS AT THE AIRPORT SEVEN OF THEM WERE TAKEN AWAY ON A SMALL AIRCRAFT FOR THE "DEFENSE OF SALAWAR", THE MAIN JUNCTION POINT BETWEEN LUANDA AND THE EAST-WEST HIGHWAY TO MALANGE. THIS GAVE AN INDICATION OF JUST HOW STRAPPED THE MPLA MAY BE FOR "COMBAT-READY" TROOPS. THE SEVEN WERE PROBABLY NO MORE THAN 16 YEARS OLD. THERE WERE NINE SHIPS IN PHE LOBITO HARBOR. WORK WAS QUIET SLOW. THE ECONOMY IS STRICTLY CASH, THEY EVEN HAD TO PAY CASH FOR AIRCRAFT FUEL.

11. THE PILOT OF RGER'S AIRCRAFT HAS LIVED IN ANGOLA FOR MOST OF HIS LIFE AND KNOWS IT THOROUGHLY. HE SAID THAT EVERY CIVILIAN PILOT PLANNED TO LEAVE ANGOLA BEFORE INDEPENDENCE. INTERNAL AIR TRAVEL HAS BECOME SO UNSAFE FOR SMALL AIRCRAFT. THE MOTTO OF THE MPLA IS "THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES, THE VICTORY IS CERTAIN". THE PILOT, FORECASTING THE FUTURE WITH DISMAY, SAID IT REALLY SHOULD BE "THE VICTORY CONTINUES BUT THE STRUGGLE

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IS CERTAIN".
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